

Prayer Meeting

DIVINE GUIDANCE.

Topic: "Divine Guidance in Life." Matt. 2: 19-23.

Week-Beginning September 5.

"Herod the King" is the first of the four of that infamous succession whose names and deeds are connected with New Testament history. He was evidently the most monstrous of this series of monsters. He was an Edomite who for political purposes became a proselyte of the Jewish religion. For thirty-five years he continued his bloody and lustful career. Among other deeds of cruelty, he put to death his wife Mariamne and two of his sons. He was seventy years of age at the time the wise men of the East came to inquire about the birth of Christ. Being a jealous tyrant, when he heard of the "King of the Jews," he was haunted with the spectre of dethronement. He at once convened "the priests and scribes" and inquired as to the place of the birth of the promised Messiah. Herod had a strange mixture of belief in prophecy and contempt for it. Fearing its fulfillment he desperately determined to defeat it. The priests and scribes very properly quoted Micah 5: 2. Herod then inquired of the wise men as to when the star appeared. Having learned this he directed the men to go to Bethlehem and search diligently for the young child and bring him word. They were guided by the star to the place of the infant Saviour's birth, but were warned in a dream not to return to Herod. The king was frenzied to desperation when he found that his scheme had miscarried and issued his terrible edict for the slaughter of all the male children under two years of age that were found in Bethlehem and the dependent villages. The horrors of this massacre were too great for pen to describe or imagination to picture. The tyrant died a few months later in excruciating agony, but plotting to the last, inquisitions of blood that were appalling to the utmost degree.

Meantime "the angel of the Lord" appeared to Joseph in a dream and directed that he should take the young child and his mother unto Egypt, to escape the fury of the king. Joseph obeyed and so the life of the infant Saviour was protected.

After Herod's death the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and instructed him to take the young child and his mother into the land of Israel. Joseph obeyed, but on learning that Herod's son was his successor, he feared to return to the vicinity of Bethlehem. He was again "warned of God in a dream" and "turned aside into the parts of Galilee." "He came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."

There are in the text assigned for our study three distinct instances of divine guidance. Two of them were of an extraordinary kind in which "the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph" and he "was warned of God in a dream." In the other case he seems to have exercised ordinary devout discretion, but as surely under divine guidance, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."

The familiar and vital truth that our God exercises his goodness and wisdom and power and love in shaping the course of our lives and so securing our safety and general well-being, is finely and impressively illustrated in this series of incidents in the infancy of our Saviour. What vast, infinite destinies hung upon these events, which apparently to the eye of the world were mere incidents in the lowly lives of an obscure family. The ministry of our Lord—his teaching, his miracles, his services of sympathy and love, his obedience unto death, the offering of himself for sin, his triumph over death, redemption itself was dependent on God's guiding hand and sovereign power. His plans were wisely formed and unerringly executed by means of the control which he exercised over the conduct of His servants. Their welfare was secured and the unique honors which made Mary blessed among women became a reality, by means of their faith and obedience in committing their lives to God's directing care.

We are His servants and have our part in the accomplish-

ment of the divine purpose. We are His dependent children and are the objects of His constant care. He will as surely and lovingly guide us as He did His servants of old and it becomes us to trust Him as implicitly as they.

Young People's Societies

TEMPERANCE.

Topic for Sunday, September 12: Temperance in All Things.

1 Corinthians 9: 23-27.

DAILY READINGS.

Monday: Self-repression. Romans 13: 11-14.

Tuesday: Denial of lawful things. Matthew 5: 29, 30.

Wednesday: Excess is slavery. 1 Corinthians 6: 9-20.

Thursday: Dangers of excess. Jude 10-16.

Friday: Sober advice. Titus 2: 2-12.

Saturday: Using, not abusing. 1 Corinthians 7: 22, 24, 29-31.

"Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things."

It is evident that no narrow meaning can be placed on the words, "Every man", "all things."

The law of temperance underlies success. It does not deny strenuousness. The rather, it makes it possible.

The man that controls himself is declared to be greater than the man who takes a city. Ruling one's own spirit is the first step in temperance.

The man or woman who is temperate has a hundred fold better opportunity to make something in life than the man or woman who is self-indulgent, given to indulgence of evil propensities and tastes.

Temperance is of many kinds. It is not confined to the matter of drinking. Intemperate reading that intoxicates the mind, intemperate dreaming that intoxicates the fancy, are as evil as that which intoxicates the body.

This is why the Apostle says: "In all things". Temperance is a great principle. Its applications are as diverse as the members of the human family and as numerous as the varying conditions and relations of that family.

There is always danger that in too feverish and furious a haste even in some things which are good we may merely swing off into some other form of evil. Hence the duty of guarding ourselves at every point, lest we defeat the very end we are seeking.

The man who is recognized for his moderation is respected and has power. Moderation is not compromise. It is principle exercised and applied with wisdom, building securely and firmly, establishing itself thoroughly as it goes along. It is aggressive without antagonizing, firm without being inelastic.

When the word "Temperance" is used, it naturally turns the thoughts toward that one aspect of the matter involved in the liquor habit. So powerful is the evil here that it has given color to all our thoughts concerning temperance and has shaped and interpreted the terms we use. Being the most common form of evil, it has determined our terms.

It is a glorious fact to record that a wave of temperance such as has never been known before, is sweeping over our land. The outward limits of the cause are extending more and more. It is said that today sixty millions of people are living under either positive prohibition or local option laws.

At its present rate, the movement will sweep the entire country in a few years. People are beginning to see that right habits mean more rapid enhancement, that the civic, social, economic and industrial conditions are depressed or elevated in proportion as these moral "waves" have power. When they see this fully they will assert the new and better life.

During the year, 5,688,381 volumes have been issued by the Society, including 864,247 complete Bibles, 1,126,565 New Testaments and 3,687,569 portions of the Scriptures. These volumes are distributed among Bible Societies. The Scriptures are distributed among the natives of various wild countries by an army of colporteurs, who frequently meet with strange and exciting adventures, some of which are narrated in the Society's report.